

Message Text

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PAGE 01 USUN N 01536 132343Z

ACTION IO-13

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TAGS: SHUM, SOCI, SGEN

SUBJECT: 62D ECOSOC--ELECTIONS TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

REF: (A) USUN 1500; (B) USUN 1516

1. ON THURSDAY, MAY 12 COUNCIL COMPLETED ELECTIONS TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (HRC) BY ELECTING THREE MEMBERS OF THE AFRICAN GROUP, IVORY COAST, SENEGAL, AND EGYPT.

2. PRIOR TO THE ELECTION BY SECRET BALLOT, THE MEMBERS OF THE AFRICAN GROUP CONTINUED THEIR PUBLIC DISPUTE OVER WHICH STATES WERE TO BE CONSIDERED AS CANDIDATES. THE SPOKESMAN OF THE AFRICAN REGIONAL GROUP CONTINUED TO MAINTAIN THAT THE AFRICAN GROUP HAD ENDORSED BY CONSENSUS THE CANDIDATURES OF BURUNDI, ETHIOPIA AND THE IVORY COAST AND THAT THE COUNCIL SHOULD THEREFORE ELECT THESE STATES BY ACCLAMATION. HOWEVER, TWO MEMBERS OF THE AFRICAN GROUP, MOROCCO AND EGYPT, INSISTED THAT THEY WERE ALSO CANDIDATES AND CALLED FOR AN OPEN ELECTION. DURING THE ENSURING DEBATE IN WHICH ONLY AFRICANS AND ARABS PARTICIPATED, IT BECAME CLEAR THAT THE ISSUE REVOLVED AROUND THE ALLOCATION OF SEATS TO THE SUB-

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PAGE 02 USUN N 01536 132343Z

REGIONAL AFRICAN GROUP. NIGERIA ARGUED THAT THE NORTH AFRICANS WERE ALREADY REPRESENTED ON THE HRC BY LIBYA AND THAT BY SEEKING ANOTHER SEAT THEY WERE TRYING TO DEPRIVE AN EAST AFRICAN STATE OF A SPACE. NIGERIA ARGUED THAT THE THREE CANDIDATES, IVORY COAST, BURUNDI, AND ETHIOPIA, WERE ENDORSED BY THE OAU AND THAT THIS ENDORSEMENT SHOULD BE RESPECTED.

3. IN VIEW OF THE OBVIOUS LACK OF CONSENSUS IN THE AFRICAN GROUP, THE CHAIRMAN FINALLY CALLED FOR ELECTION BY SECRET BALLOT, AT WHICH POINT BOTH SENEGAL AND UPPER VOLTA ANNOUNCED THAT THEY WOULD ALSO BE CANDIDATES FOR ELECTION. THEY HAD BOTH ANNOUNCED THEIR CANDIDATURES EARLIER IN THE MONTH BUT SUBSEQUENTLY WITHDREW IN DEFERENCE TO THE DECISION OF THE AFRICAN GROUP. THEY STATED THAT SINCE THE ENDORSEMENT OF THE AFRICAN GROUP WAS NOT TO BE ACCEPTED BY THE COUNCIL, THEY NO LONGER FELT BOUND TO ABIDE BY THE "CONSENSUS" AND WOULD ADD THEIR NAMES TO THE LIST OF CANDIDATES, MAKING A TOTAL OF SEVEN CANDIDATES.

4. ON THE FIRST BALLOT THE IVORY COAST WAS ELECTED WITH 33 VOTES AND UPPER VOLTA AND ETHIOPIA WERE ELIMINATED FROM FURTHER BALLOTING WITH 4 AND 19 VOTES RESPECTIVELY. ON THE SECOND BALLOT WITH SENEGAL, BURUNDI, MOROCCO AND EGYPT COMPETING FOR THE REMAINING TWO SEATS, SENEGAL WAS ELECTED WITH 33 VOTES AND BURUNDI WAS ELIMINATED. ON THE THIRD BALLOT CONTEST BETWEEN EGYPT AND MOROCCO, EGYPT WAS ELECTED BY A VOTE OF 28 TO 17.

5. COMMENT. SENEGAL'S ELECTION ON THE SECOND BALLOT WAS PARTICULARLY IMPRESSIVE SINCE IT HAD NOT BEEN ACTIVELY CAMPAIGNING DURING THE PAST SEVERAL DAYS AND IS ONLY AN OBSERVER ON THE COUNCIL. AS SUCH IT COULD NOT, EVEN WHEN ACTIVELY CAMPAIGNING, PROMISE ITS VOTE TO ANY ONE ELSE IN RETURN FOR SUPPORT.
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PAGE 03 USUN N 01536 132343Z

SENEGAL REPRESENTS THE SAME SUB-REGIONAL GROUP AS THE IVORY COAST AND THUS ITS ELECTION IS A TRIBUTE TO THE PERSONAL REPUTATION OF KEBA M'BAYE, THE SENEGALESE REP ON THE HRC. OF EQUAL INTEREST WAS THE QUICK DEFEAT OF ETHIOPIA AND BURUNDI, TWO OF THE THREE ENDORSED AFRICAN CANDIDATES. FROM THE NUMBER OF VOTES EACH RECEIVED, WE WOULD GUESS THAT THEY GOT VIRTUALLY NO ASIAN, LATIN, OR WESTERN GROUP VOTES.
LEONARD

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